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مجلة الدراسات الإسلامية والفكر للبحوث التخصصية

المجلد **6**، العدد 1، يناير 2020م

e-ISSN: 2289-9065

STRATEGIES OF TRANSLATING INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE ARABIC USE OF IRONIC LANGUAGE EXPRESSIONS IN THE QUR'AN OPPOSED TO THEIR ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY ARBERRY(1955)

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1441هـ- 2020 م

ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received 22/9/2019
Received in revised form110/2019
Accepted 30/12/2019
Available online 15/1/2020
Keywords:

Abstract

This paper investigates the intercultural differences hindering the flow of translating ironic speech acts of the Qur'an into English by Aberry (1955). The study is trying to investigate the intercultural differences in the Arabic use of Arabic language expressions in the Qur'an opposed to their English translation by Arberry (1955). The study concluded that historical culture, lack of hyponym produced due to semantically complex concepts, poly-semantic words, concepts and expressions and above all emotive meaning play a fundamental role in hindering the flow of meaningful intended translation to the Qur'anic speech acts into English. Study, however, recommends some translation techniques through which such a problem might be solved or at least minimized.

1. Introduction

It is claimed that "irony is probably as ancient as humankind" (Moneva, 2000, p.3), and it may therefore be thought of as a cognitive mechanism in humans, which formulates the innate ability for human interaction and communication. Skorov (2009, p.2) states that "the term irony is derived from the Greek word eironeia, meaning dissimulation" or being similar and not similar at the same time. Kadhim (2009) conducted a contrastive study about how syntactic, stylistic and lexical aspects of irony are translated from the Quran into English. Kadhim concluded that translating irony from the Quran into English is a difficult task; "the translation of irony is as elusive as the concept itself". This is because textual realization is different in both languages due to the discrepancies in linguistic functions and culture in both languages. Ironic meaning is translated either by paraphrase strategies or literal translation. Najjar (2015) also conducted a contrastive study of how irony is translated from the Holy Quran into English. Najjar's conclusions are almost the same as those of Kadhim's. To the best of our knowledge, we have just found the previous two studies in literature on irony in the Quran; and there may be no studies about the

metaphorical irony in the Quran. Thus, this study has filled a research gap and maybe considered the first one to investigate irony in relation with metaphor. The results of the study will not only bring aesthetic literary value of the Quran to the fore, it will also give new insights into the technical skills of literary translation in the field of culture specific terms and lexicographic items that are charged with their own semantic and discourse related connotations. The results of this study may possibly help improve the target readers' understanding of metaphoric ironic speech acts at the source level of discourse. In this study, we are trying to cover one question: What are the intercultural differences in the Arabic use of ironic language expressions in the Qur'an as opposed to their English translation by Arberry (1955)?

2.METHODOLOGY

As far as irony understanding and realization are concerned, The *Relevance Theory (RT)* has played the most essential role in providing a framework for the analysis and understanding of language as a sequence of social and communicative acts (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, p.26). The study narrowed the scope on *verbal irony* through which the speaker rejects a tacitly attributed thought as ludicrously false" (Wilson, 2013, p.3), and secondly, "the speaker of an ironical utterance is not saying the opposite of what he means, but 'echoes' a thought (e.g. a belief, an intention, a norm-based expectation) that refers to an individual, a group, or to people in general, and expresses a mocking, scornful or contemptuous attitude to this thought". (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, p.38).

To answer the only research question, the study pragmatically describes and analyses how irony occurs in the source language text (SLT) and how ironic speech acts are conveyed and translated into the English language version by the translator. Thus, speech act theory (SAT) and echoic account theory (EAT) are used. The aim of the use of SAT is to systematically categorize all the data samples under the main categories of speech acts. This classification has helped the researcher to go through deep systematic analysis to the multifaceted functions of ironic speech acts within the discourse structure. The answer to the second part of the first research question, the study has applied EAT of irony to interpret and describe irony on the whole level of discourse structure.

The study focuses mainly on which strategies and techniques the translator used in rendering the intended meaning of irony of speech acts in the Quran. To achieve this, the researcher will describe and look at first how linguistic and paralinguistic devices and techniques occur in the ironic speech acts of the Quran, and second how they are conveyed and translated into the English version.

3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We have first chosen two texts out of fifty to discuss in this paper. These samples are classified in order, starting (from a. back translation (BT) via b. Arberry's (1955) translation) to c. pragmatics analysis to d. strategies used for translating ironic speech acts.

Selected Texts:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّىٰ يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ

a- Text1: Transliteration

Inna allathecna kaththaboo bi-ayatina waistakbaroo AAanha la tufattahu lahum abwabu alssama-i wala yadkhuloona aljannata hatta yalija aljamalu fee sammi alkhiyati.

b- Text1:Translation

"Those that cry lies to Our signs and wax proud against them the gates of heaven shall not be opened to them, nor shall they enter Paradise until the camel passes through the eye of the needle. " (Q 7:40)

c- Pragmatic Analysis:

First, the ironic speech act is conveyed by assertive ironic speech acts conveyed by the dependent adverbial clause of time **"حَتَّىٰ يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ" "until the camel passes through the eye of the needle".** The illocutionary point of the propositional content of the speaker's utterance indicates a future representation to some certain matters of affairs. The intended meaning

conveyed by ironic speech acts implies another meaning rather than the assertive one. It entails a hybrid representation of speech acts combining both assertiveness with the illocutionary force of directiveness conveyed by "promise". Thus, the implicit meaning or illocutionary force of the paradoxical irony entails both inevitability and seriousness of the future happenings and second entails speaker'condemn, sarcasm and dissatisfaction with the unbelievers who disbelieve in Allah and on the Day of Judgment. It is interesting that verbal irony intersects with paradoxical irony conveyed by the entire subordinate clause carrying within which the intended pragmatic meaning. The ironic speech act is paradoxical because it consists of two contradictory ideas (which can be understood through contextual and pragmatic inferences, which are highly important to derive the conversational imlicature). The contradictory ideas lie in the fact that a camel can never pass through an eye of the needle, because the camel is a very big animal and hence it is not possible for it to pass through a very tiny object. There is an interaction between paradoxical verbal irony and metonymy as a figure of speech. The interaction lies in the semiotic reference that the metonymic expressions **"الْجَمَلُ"** translated as **"camel", and "سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ"** translated as **"the eye of the needle"**. The first metonymic expression **"الْجَمَلُ/ camel"**, stands in for a big animal (or in other words a big object that needs spacious space to pass through). The second metonymic expression **"سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ"**, translated as **"the eye of the needle"**, on the other hand, stands in for a very tiny object through which it is impossible for an object to pass. The semantic representation of the metonymic expression presupposes the pragmatic meaning derived by the pragmatic violation of the maxim of relevance through which the intended implicature is arrived at. To conclude, they type of irony is paradox that intersects with metonymy. The functions of irony are first theological presupposing the fact that the unbelievers' entry into heaven is impossible; second psychological presupposing Allah's dissatisfaction with and disapproval of the unbelievers; and third aggressive presupposing Allah's torture to and wrath at the unbelievers.

d) Pragmatic Analysis of the English Translation Equivalent

The translator translated the SL ironic speech act **"وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّىٰ يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ"**, into the TLT as **"nor shall they enter Paradise until the camel passes through the eye of the needle."** All lexical and grammatical units of the SLT are literally rendered into the TLT. Thus,

the translation is a formal-based one, as the translator used synonyms and word for word translation playing on the syntactic level in conveying the ironic speech acts from the SLT into the TLT. The meaning of the SL ironic speech acts retains in the TLT, because the surface syntactic structure of the SL has one-to-one equivalent in the TLT. However, the emotiveness of ironic speech acts of the original speech act is still a challenge to be rendered and literal translation alone might not convey the intended meaning. This is because the ironic speech act implies within its meta-representative structure two or more than figures of speech. The emotive meaning of these figures of speech is presupposed by the functions of irony discussed above.

Text (2)

a) Arabic Version

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِن دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلً

b) Arabic Version in Latin Script

Afahasibal lazeena kafarooo any yattakhizoo 'ibaadee min dooneee awliyaaa'; innaaa a'tadnaa jahannama lilkaafi reena nuzulaa.

c) English Translation (Arberry 1955)

18:102 What, do the unbelievers reckon that they may take My servants as friends, apart from Me? We have prepared Gehenna for the unbelievers' hospitality.

d) Pragmatic Analysis of the Arabic Original

This Quranic text consists of two ironic speech acts. The first one is conveyed by a rhetorical question "**أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِن دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ**" translated as **"what, do the unbelievers reckon that they may take My servants as friends, apart from Me?"**, whose illocutionary force is far different from the locutionary one. The second speech act is conveyed through the declarative assertive sentence **"إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلً"** translated as **"we have prepared Gehenna for the unbelievers' hospitality"**. According to APT, first the rhetorical question functions as a stylistic device or a strategy of irony recognition, presupposing anger, mockery, denial and criticism. So,

the question does not require a yes-no answer, however, conveys the Speaker's reaction towards what the unbelievers believe and worship. The noun phrase **"نُزُلًا"** exhibits irony that is generated within the whole contextual structure of the Quranic discourse. **"نُزُلًا"** literally and culturally means good hospitality that be offered to a guest. In this particular context, however, **"نُزُلًا"** means the opposite. The type of irony, therefore, is paradox bringing out a rhetorical effect on the whole discourse structure of this Quranic text. The meaning of the paradoxical irony is contradictory, because it entails the opposite meaning of the noun phrase. In other words, the ironic noun phrase entails a positive meaning- that of hospitality, and a negative intended meaning- that of punishment and torture. In addition, the ironic noun phrase may function as pun, so irony and pun can interact and intersect with each other to produce an effective rhetorical meaning. Pun has two functions: the close unintended meaning *hospitality* and *good treatment*, while the negative intended meaning is *Hell Fire*. The negative intended meaning that pun entails leads to paradoxical irony. It is because Hell Fire is not a place for hospitality, but a place for sinners to be tortured and punished. Moreover, the ironic noun phrase may function as a euphemistic expression used to replace another more harsh expression describing the way the unbelievers will be treated. To conclude, types of irony are first paradoxical irony which intersects and is connected to pun and euphemism. Functions of irony that the verbal irony presupposes are first socio-aggressive presupposing mockery, disgrace and criticism. The second function is psycho-aggressive presupposing anger and dissatisfaction. The third function would be socio- theological presupposing Allah's advice to human beings to believe in Him and in the Day of Judgment before it is late.

e) Pragmatic Analysis of the English Translation Equivalent

The translator translated the rhetorical question of the SLT " **أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِن دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ**", into the TLT as **"what, do the unbelievers reckon that they may take My servants as friends, apart from Me?"** To retain the pragmatic meaning presupposed by the rhetorical question, the translator added **"what"**, which is a grammatical particle that explicitly brings out the pragmatic meaning of the SLT into the TLT. In the SLT, and according to the exegesis of the Qur'an, **"عِبَادِي"** means Allah's devoted worshippers, specifically angels, Jesus and Alaziz, who all are monotheist and God fearing. "**عِبَادِي**", however, is rendered with another

synonymic lexeme **“servants”**, which means, according to Advance English Dictionary, maid. Besides that, **“أَوْلِيَاءَ”** in the SLT means devoted worshippers (such as angels, Jesus and Aziz) who are taken as *gods* by unbelievers, who ask them for help and support. **“أَوْلِيَاءَ”** is, however, translated with another literal synonymic lexeme as **“friends”**. The translator translated this declarative ironic speech act **“إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلًا”**, into the TL as **“we have prepared Gehenna for the unbelievers' hospitality”**. The translator rendered the grammatical structure and lexical units of the SLT literally word by word into the TLT. In the SL, The meaning of **“جَهَنَّمَ”** is Hellfire, however, a transliteration strategy is used to render the SL noun phrase into the TLT. In the SLT**,** **“نُزُلًا”** is well translated as a noun phrase **“hospitality”**, which presupposes the meaning of the ironic speech act. Accurately, the translator retained the paradoxical meaning of the SL noun phrase **“نُزُلًا”** into the TL, rendering it into **“hospitality”**. To conclude, the translation is mainly a formal-based one despite of the explicitness translation technique, which would convey the SL meaning dynamically into the TLT. This is because the translator literally translated the SL lexical items into the TLT. Therefore, some TL lexical items do not fill the semantic gap of the semantic features of some SL lexical items within the domain of ironic speech acts. Besides that, transliteration strategy is used, while there is a lexical equivalent of the SL lexical item in the TLT. Literal translation is well-used in formally rendering one SL lexical item into the TL as mentioned above. This is because the TL lexical item shares the same semantic properties to that of the SL lexical item. However, the emotiveness of ironic speech acts of the original speech act is still a challenge to be rendered and literal translation alone might not convey the intended meaning. This is because the ironic speech act implies within its meta-representative structure two or more than figures of speech. The emotive meaning of these figures of speech is presupposed by the functions of irony discussed above.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that all ironic speech acts are literally translated either by using word-for-word translation or using synonyms. Consequently, there is a semantic and pragmatic gap in the

translated target text. This gap is due to the unique cultural, lexicographical, contextual and pragmatic aspects that distinguish the metalinguistic system of Arabic from the English one.

The study also concludes that EAT is essential in conveying intended meaning of the SLT into the TLT. The study findings show that the application of EAT on interpreting verbal irony can interpret various functions and forms of verbal irony such as pun, euphemism, metonymy, paradox and sarcasm. The study concludes that verbal irony intersects with paradoxical irony, which is conveyed by pun as a figure of speech. Besides that verbal irony is found to function is euphemism for the same noun phrase, which figuratively can be classified under more than a figure of speech. Furthermore, paradoxical irony as a form of verbal irony is found to be conveyed by metonymic expression. The study concludes that all speech ats are literally translated either using word for word translation or using synonyms. It has been found that use of transliteration, word for word translation and synonyms is not effective in all cases because the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the ironic speech acts to replace the words of the original do not carry the same semantic and pragmatic features in conveying the meaning in the TT. The study shows that transliteration technique is used to translate the SL ironic speech acts into English, though the SL ironic speech acts have equivalents sharing similar semantic and pragmatic features in the TLT. The study findings go hand by hand with Kadhim's and Ibrahim's findings. The study, however, concluded that Arberry used another semantic strategy (synonyms) to convey metaphorical irony on the structural level. The study differs from the previous studies in that it applied EAT and speech act theory in order to investigate the emotive pragmatic meaning of the SL ironic speech acts and their translations in English. *The intercultural differences found in translating verbal irony form Arabic into English are first emotiveness (which lies in the difficulty in translating emotive meaning and its associated types), second hyponymic and poly-semantic expressions conveyed by figures of speech, third tenor and mode of ironic Quran'ic discourse. The study, thus, shows that due to literal translation emotive, associative, connotative and expressive meanings of ironic speech acts conveyed by verbal irony and its forms and types are missing in the TLT.* In order to solve such a thorny problem, the researchers recommend that literal translation strategies such as loanwords, borrowing, using synonyms or transliteration, or using a structure or semantic shift technique should be used and accompanied by footnotes, or some marginal explanation, or using explicitness

translation technique or new neologisms. This can bridge the gap between the SL and TL in perceiving irony and its functions.

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